

May 10, 2019

The Honorable Jay Inslee  
Washington State Governor  
Legislative Building

Dear Governor Inslee:

We are urging you to remove the \$750,000 in funding in Section 118 of ESHS 1109 (the biennial operating budget) for a study of breaching of the lower Snake River dams. We make this request for the following reasons.

This issue remains profoundly controversial and divisive, and the general issue of Snake River dam operations is already being thoroughly studied under the federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion and the comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement associated with that effort. A parallel state study, which is less comprehensive and with far less funding, will divide the interests who are working to recover Orca whales, and will not occur within a time frame that will provide meaningful progress in Orca recovery efforts.

The Snake River is a key part of the transportation and agricultural sectors of our economy. It also provides reliable carbon-free power that underpins our baseline power needs.

The facts are that juvenile fish survival rates past each of the eight federal dams on this river are between 95% and 98%. In addition, returns of chinook, sockeye and steelhead on the Snake River have been on an increasing trend for twenty-five years.

Extreme measures such as dam breaching have been studied and rejected many times over the years. The State of Washington and the tribal community have steadfastly defended the existing federal Biological Opinion process. Instead of pursuing this divisive path, we need to renew our investments in fish passage, habitat and other river improvements that have led to a dramatic increase in Snake River fish returns over the past ten years.

In addition, these dams are 100% federally owned, and state measures to remove them are simply the wrong approach. The federal agencies are required to explore a range of reasonable alternatives for long-term system operations that accounts for flood control, irrigation, power generation, navigation, fish and wildlife, cultural resources and recreation. The federal EIS and Record of Decision are on track for completion by September 2020. Funding a state study needlessly diverts funds that could be used more effectively in other Orca and fish-recovery efforts.

Sincerely,



Governor Jay Inslee  
May 10, 2019  
Page Two

